

Special Committee on Aging
Faces of Aging: Personal Struggles
to Confront the Long-Term Crisis
OPENING STATEMENT
of
CHAIRMAN BREAU

This committee has the responsibility to look ahead and see that as a nation we are prepared to handle the long-term care needs of the pending "age wave" of 77 million baby boomers. That is why we devoted 13 previous hearings to various aspects of long-term care.

Over the course of our hearings we learned many things from our witnesses, but two themes were heard over and over. The first is that the demand for long-term care services far exceeds available services. The average person who needs long-term care assistance must depend on family for everyday support to live independently. The second recurring theme is that there is an institutional bias. Most Medicaid dollars are spent on institutional care. It is an entitlement to go into a nursing home but you need a waiver to stay in your home. This policy is upside down.

Today we want to explore the personal side of the long-term care issue. We want to put some names and faces on these issues. What is it like to try to navigate such an inefficient, outdated long-term care system? Will you receive better services if you live in Oregon rather than Louisiana? Where do you begin your search? Who do you call? What do you need to know?

While we can't overhaul the long-term care system overnight and offer everyone the services that they need, we can offer families some assistance in their search for long-term care. This card lists resources on one side that you can either access with a telephone call or a computer web site. The other side lists steps to take and basic questions that you need to ask in order to find care for your loved one. I hope this will be helpful to people who are facing or will soon be facing a long-term care situation in their family.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.